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THE MARRIAGE DOWRY

OR A ROLAND FOR AN OLIVER.

On the evening of the 20th of January, 1795, the city of Amsterdam was

thrown into an unusual state of bustle

and confusion by the entrance of the

French army under Fichet. While

the troops with piled arms waited their

billets and rations, the inhabitants hastened

to illuminate in honor of their arrival,

and in spite of the piercing cold, thronged to

welcome the tired heroes.

Amid the general rejoicing, one house

alone remained with closed doors and

darkened windows. It was the dwelling

of a wealthy merchant, Woerden, who

wholly occupied in his business, cared

little for politics, still less for the arrival

of the French, and was far too careful

of his money to waste it like his neighbors

in illumination.

Wrapped in his fur dressing gown,

a sculkin cat drawn closely over the

few grey hairs Time had left upon his

head, he had wheeled his easy chair

close to the chimney; and as he rubbed

his hands over the bright coal fire, seemed

lost in reverie, from which neither the

beer can, nor a long clay pipe on the

table at his side, had power to raise him.

All at once the silence was interrupted

by a violent ring at the house bell.

The old man started, and turning to a

stout red check servant, who seated at a

respectable distance, was occupying

himself in knitting.

"See who it is, Jacqueline," said he,

"that comes to disturb us at this unseasonable

hour."

In a few minutes a tall young man

entered, and throwing of his cloak, saluted

the merchant as father.

"Ha! it is you, Wilhelm! I did

not expect you back so soon."

"I have just returned from Brock,"

replied the other, "and should have arrived

long ago, had not the road been so

encumbered by troops and officers."

"Have you seen Van Elburg?"

"Yes," answered the young man, taking

his seat by the fire, "and he consents to

my marriage with his daughter, and

refuses to give more than four thousand

ducats for her dowry."

"Then he may keep both ducats and

daughter," said the merchant, angrily.

"But consider, father—"

"Consider what?" interrupted Woerden.

"There is nothing to consider. I

know at your age, love outweighs

gold, but time will teach you, that when

poverty comes in at the door, love flies

out at the window."

"Yes, father," argued the young man,

"but Van Elburg is one of the richest

men in the country, and sooner or later

his daughter must have his fortune."

"That's true," said Woerden, "Van Elburg

knows well enough what he is about, but

cunning as he is, he shall not put a bad

bargain on me. As for you, Wilhelm,

I have promised to give you up my business,

and now recommend your taking

a word of advice with me. Never give

more than you receive, and always con-

sider yourself before other people, in

your transactions. Rely on it, that is

the only way to prosper in business, as

well as in love."

The young man knew his father's hum-

or too well to press the matter further

at least at that time.

As he sat brooding in silence over his

disappointment, the house bell rang, and

the tread of a horse's feet was heard in

the court yard, while the dog commenced

a furious barking.

"It is certainly a stranger this time,"

said Mynheer Woerden; "there's no

mistaking the dog's bark."

He was interrupted by the servant

bringing in a package.

"Commissariat department," said her

master with no little surprise, as he

opened it, but an expression of uneasiness

which had at first slightly contracted

his features, changed into one of

pleasure as he read on; "an order to deliv-

er four hundred thousand herrings for

the use of the French army," he

continued; "a very respectable commis-

sion." "Wilhelm," he very suddenly ex-

claimed, after a short pause, "Wilhelm,

you shall marry Van Elburg's daughter,

and he shall give you a handsome

dowry in spite of himself!"

"How say you, my dear father?"

replied the son, unable to believe his

senses at this sudden transition.

"I have all to me, Wilhelm," said Wo-

erden. "Order our horses to be saddled

at day break, and mind that I am called

in time, for we must be at Brock be-

fore 12 o'clock, and now good night!"

The rising sun saw our travelers on

the road to that celebrated village, where

cleanliness is carried to such an extent,

that before entering the streets both fa-

ther and son in compliance with invari-

able custom, were obliged to dismount

and leave their horses to the care of a

servant. At the door of Van Elburg's

house they were obliged to do what a

few years later neither Napoleon nor

Alexander were exempted from, and

taking off their boots, replaced them

with slippers, before they were allowed

to enter the room where he sat with his

daughter, Charlotte.

"Good morning, Mynheer Woerden,"

said he, shaking his friend warmly by

the hand. "Have you been frightened

out of your good city by the French,

that you honor me so early with a

friendly visit?"

"Not at all, Van Elburg," said the

father, "I care nothing about the French

as I never meddle with politics, it is

quite immaterial to me who govern our

town. But I am come to make you a

proposal. I have undertaken to furn-

ish the Commissariat four hundred thou-

sand herrings on this day a month, and

I wish to know if it would be conven-

ient for you to procure them for me in

three weeks."

"At what price?"

"Ten guilders per thousand."

"Ten guilders," repeated the other,

"drawing out the contract, then," said

Woerden, "and when it is signed, I shall

be happy to partake of your hospitality,

for my ride has given me an appetite."

Then looking at Charlotte, he contin-

ued, "I have come to arrange another

matter, too, which we can discuss after

dinner."

It was in vain that, during the eve-

ning Woerden tried every way to change

his friend's resolution respecting his

daughter's fortune. After a long dis-

cussion, he was obliged to give up the

point, and the marriage was at length

fixed for the following week.

Next day, as Wilhelm and his father

returned home, the former could not re-

frain from expressing some curiosity

concerning the cause of this sudden

change in his prospects.

"What do you mean?" inquired Wil-

helm's father.

"Have you not given up the point

about his daughter's fortune?"

"I should have thought you knew me

better," replied Woerden, looking slyly

at his son. "But no matter—it is suffi-

cient that you marry the girl that you

like."

Once more at home the merchant

shut himself in his office until the eve-

ning, when he appeared with a packet

of letters, which were immediately sent

to the post.

On the day appointed for the mar-

riage, Wilhelm and his father arrived

at Brock, where they found a large party

of friends and relations assembled

to meet them. Van Elburg welcomed

them with cordiality, but there was an

expression of care and embarrassment

on his face that at first made the bride-

groom fear some fresh obstacle to his

happiness. The elder Woerden, how-

ever, in no way shared his son's anxiety;

for he could gaze a tolerable good guest

at the cause of his host's uneasiness.

"Mynheer Van Elburg," he exclaim-

ed, "what can be the matter? Are you

unwell?"

"No, my dear friend, not ill, but in

the most unpleasant dilemma possible.

I wish to speak to you immediately in

private."

"Is it anything respecting the mar-

riage?" asked Woerden, "if you wish to

be off your word, it is still time."

"No, not for the world."

"In that case we will proceed to the

church at once. You know I like to do

things regularly, and as I come here to

see my son married, we will finish that

business first, and then I shall be happy

to hear what you have to say."

There was no remedy; and it was not

until after the happy pair had been

made man and wife that Van Elburg

could succeed in catching his friend

alone.

"I am bound to deliver you four

hundred thousand herrings in four-

teen days, said he, "and not a single

fish can be had at any price."

Woerden could not restrain his

laughter. "I dare say you," he re-

plied, "I bought them up long ago."

"In that case, of course, the con-

tract is at an end," said Van Elburg

looking doubtfully at his friend.

"By no means—our at least on cer-

tain conditions. We have this day

united our children, Van Elburg, and

shall leave them a handsome fortune

when we die. But as regards the

present, matters are less fairly ar-

ranged. My son receives a capital

business, while your daughter re-

ceives only a few thousand ducats—

Now as I did not like to make the

young people unhappy by refusing

my consent to their marriage, I

thought you and I would settle the

matter another way. You have to

deliver four hundred thousand her-

rings at ten guilders per thousand;

you can get them from no one but

me; and I must have fifty guilders

per thousand, or I do not part with a

single tale. The difference is exactly

sixteen thousand guilders, which I in-

tend to pay to my son as his wife's

dowry."

The Herring are ready; but high or

low, not a barrel is to be found."

Van Elburg's little grey eyes twink-

led comically. "Every man for him-

self, Woerden. You bought the fish,

and I bought the barrels. But as an

old friend, I want take the advantage of

you, and you shall have as many as you

want for exactly sixteen thousand guilder-

s above cost price."

Woerden looked rather blank, but

did seek his best to conceal his vexa-

tion.

"The trick is not a bad one," said he

with a forced smile; "but you must con-

fess that I taught it you."

"Ay, ay," returned the other; "you

are clever fellows in Amsterdam; but

we are not all fools in Brock!"

BEAT AT HIS OWN GAME.

Not many years ago there was,

and perhaps there is yet, a law in the

State of Connecticut which sets forth

that any person found driving upon

the highway on Sunday should be

fined ten dollars, the complainant to

receive half the penalty. Now there

never was a law devised, planned or

laid down, but what some "cute" in-

dividual will find a hole or flaw to

crawl through it, whatever may be

its "tight fits," or intricate details.

But somebody must be caught of

course, and sometimes it does happen

that the most wary and wretched get

caught in the very trap set by them-

selves to allure or trip the unwary—

hence my story.

It is now no longer, I believe, an

unsolved question, but a fixed fact,

that Yankees are cute if occasion re-